

Senator Tammy Baldwin
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Greetings Senator Baldwin:

A Canadian Corporation known as Aquila is currently in the final stages of permitting for a gold, zinc and other metals mining project in Lake Township in Menominee County, Michigan. Lake Township lies adjacent to Marinette County, Wisconsin and the two states are separated by the 116 mile iconic Menominee River which defines a portion of the border between the two states. This project has been in the proposal stages for several years and has become very controversial. When first proposed the Aquila Corporation, or its predecessor organization, filed claims for mineral rights under 38,000 acres of public and private property in Marinette County and 53,000 acres of such land in Menominee county. Their right to claim rights on private and public lands has been challenged and appears at this point to have no legal bases.

The proposed open-pit mine will be about 2000 feet wide, 150 feet from the Menominee River and within a couple of miles of Shakey Lakes park which encompasses 5 connected lakes and which, along with the river provides recreational opportunities, hiking, fishing and enjoyment to citizens of the county and visitors alike. The area also contains sacred Native American burial sites.

Over a period of time it is expected that the mine will crush billions of pounds of rock into a very fine powder in order to extract gold, zinc, and other minerals. It is alleged that this process will produce millions of pounds of toxic substances, including lead, into the air. Cyanide will be used as a part of the extraction process and the plan is to store the resulting acid waste products into a giant pit in close proximity to the Menominee River. There is great concern that leakage into the river is a very potential problem and an occasional flood would be a disaster. There are also great concerns as to air quality, noise, heavy road traffic etc. The Aquila Company denies that any of scenarios will cause problems.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has given preliminary approval for the mine and indicates that a certain amount of pollution into the river and air is allowable considering the potential economic return to the area. Many citizens of the area are highly skeptical of the DEQ's decision considering the lead poisoning debacle in Flint Michigan where the DEQ also gave its approval.

I believe that approval of this mine poses substantial potential health and environmental danger for both Wisconsin and Michigan considering that both states border on the river and that it empties into Green Bay, a part of Lake Michigan. There are likely also vulnerable wetlands in close proximity to the proposed project.

My question is whether or not the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or any other federal governmental entity needs to look at and sign off on such a project before it can proceed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ex. 6 - Personal Privacy